

Oh where are you coming from
soldier, gaunt soldier

With weapons beyond
any reach of my mind

With weapons so deadly
the world must grow older

And die in its tracks
if it does not turn kind

Stephen Vincent Benét, *Song for Three Soldiers*

© Estate of Stephen Vincent Benét

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The War Game

Peter Watkins

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THE WAR GAME

by Peter Watkins
based on his controversial BBC TV film

'If the Russians, or anyone else,
attacked Britain with nuclear weapons,
would you want us to retaliate?'

**'I would not want us to sit back
and do nothing about it. Yes, I think
perhaps I would retaliate'**



THE WAR GAME

by Peter Watkins



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This book is an adaptation of the BBC documentary film 'The War Game'

It is written by Peter Watkins, who wrote and produced the original film

The design is by Paul Watkins

The photographs in the book include, by permission of the BBC, many still frames from the film itself, which was photographed by Peter Bartlett, and also photographs specially taken by Patrick Ward, Geoff Sanders, Claire Ritchie, Stephen Goldblatt and Juliet Highet

There is not a single genuine newsreel photograph in the book

There cannot be, because this book deals with an event which has not yet taken place

World War Three

This is how it may begin

This is

THE WAR GAME





Vietnam



If the Chinese decide to actively support the cause of North Vietnam they will probably move whole divisions of 'volunteers' across the border in a mass invasion of South Vietnam

If this happens it is likely that the military balance will swing sharply against the American forces in this theatre of war

The Americans will then be compelled to double their forces by a series of massive airlifts. Additional forces will perhaps be supplied by Britain and the Commonwealth countries



The brutality and severity of the conflict will be increased as both sides make a desperate bid for victory

Following a refusal from the Chinese Government to withdraw their invading forces, the Americans will probably threaten the use of **tactical nuclear weapons** on either North Vietnamese staging areas or on China itself

Berlin

The Soviet forces would then probably counter-threaten the American action by sealing off all Western access to the allied garrisons in Berlin

The West Berlin citizens, without hope of a second airlift, would probably demonstrate and riot against the Wall—and then this could happen . . .



At one of the checkpoints, a West Berlin youth is shot down by the East Berlin People's Police. Within minutes, gunfire is exchanged between the East and West garrisons



This boy is the first casualty of World War Three

Great Britain

Counter-force (military) targets

Britain's present nuclear deterrent is in the form of thermonuclear bombs or the guided nuclear missile 'Blue Steel' carried in the 100 Vulcan and Victor Mk II bombers of the RAF.

In a time of extreme international crisis, it is at present planned to disperse a part of this 'V-bomber' force to certain RAF and civilian airfields spread throughout Britain. There the aircraft are to wait in flights of 4 per airfield until given the order to take off against targets in Russia or elsewhere.

There are well over 60 of these dispersal airfields in Britain.

The blobs on the map indicate the approximate locations of just some of them, and also the locations of the various USAF airfields, Royal naval bases and early warning stations scattered throughout the country.

Each of these points—particularly the dispersal airfields—has become a key target for some of the 700-750 Soviet mid-range nuclear missiles (IRBMs) at present targeted against military objectives in Britain, France, West Germany and NATO countries elsewhere.

Each of these Soviet IRBMs has a nuclear warhead in the megaton range—i.e., it has the explosive power of at least 1,000,000 tons of TNT.

Each of these missiles (probably 2 or 3 per target) is almost certainly programmed and pointing at its objective.

Now





Counter-value (civilian) targets

The blobs on the map indicate the key civilian target areas of Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds, Hull, Newcastle, Cardiff, Bristol, Belfast, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and London.

Within these areas live almost *one-third* of the entire population of Britain.

An alignment of the map opposite and the map on the preceding page will perhaps show that—per acre of land mass—Great Britain has more potential nuclear targets than any other country in the world.

Even if Britain's key cities were not themselves the object of a direct nuclear attack—because of their position many of them would certainly suffer considerable damage from an attack aimed *only* at Britain's military targets.

The resulting side-effects of such an attack are referred to in official parlance as '*counterforce plus bonus*'.

If, at a time of such international tension that there was a grave possibility of a nuclear war and the British Government decided to implement a state of national emergency, then the following measures would probably have to be taken:

Public Utility and Supply Restrictions



Immediate closure of all food stores and petrol stations. Their stocks to be placed under guard

Restriction of all inter-town movement

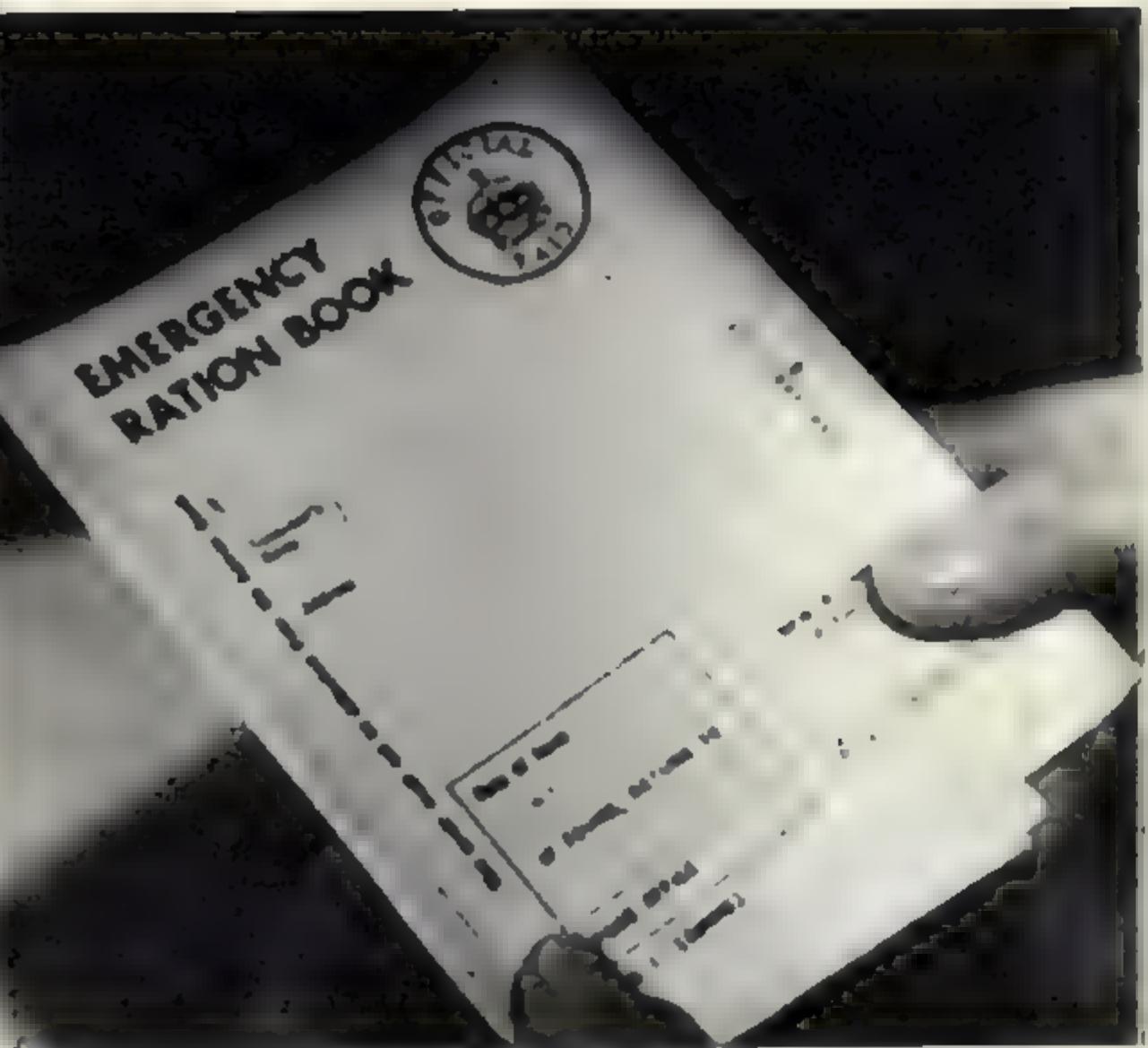
Traffic on the main roads limited to priority and war effort vehicles

Commandeering of all public transport for use in civilian evacuation



Closure of the public and private telephone system to all but priority users

Immediate restrictions on all supplies of gas, electricity and water



Rationing

The evacuation of 10,000 people into any given area in Britain would call for the immediate need of an extra:

3,000 loaves of bread
5,000 pints of milk
15,000 lbs of potatoes
20,000 tins of fruit, meat and vegetables

This amount of extra food—the minimum *daily* requirement for an extra 10,000 people—would have to be supplied from within the reception area

In an attempt to meet such a demand—the local authorities would have to implement wartime rationing

'With this rationing there's going to be chaos. Absolute bloody chaos. What am I supposed to say to a family who will want to stock up for when the shops run out? Because they will run out. What do I say? 'Here you are—6 eggs and half a pound of bacon—and that's all you get?'

English Grocer

Evacuation

The map on the opposite page shows the areas of Britain into which it is proposed to evacuate 9½ million of her priority classes at a time of threatened war.

For fear of upsetting the political and military balance at a time of extreme tension, it is unlikely that any Government would show its hand by setting in motion mass civilian evacuation until the very last minute.

In terms of World War Three, such a step would probably not be taken until at least there were an immediate threat of tactical nuclear war in Europe. And once this had begun it is extremely unlikely that there would be a delay of more than one to two days in the process of escalation to all-out strategic war.

In those one to two days, it is planned to evacuate 9,500,000 people in Britain.

In 1939, it took three days to evacuate 1,200,000 people.

According to the last published government memorandum (Circular No. 15/62 issued by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government on 28th March 1962) at a time of threatened nuclear war:

People in priority classes would move on a voluntary basis from certain dispersal areas to reception areas in parts of West England, South East England, and Wales. The priority classes comprise the following:

- a) Children under the age of 15 travelling with their mothers
- b) Other children under the age of 18 who are still at school full-time
- c) Adolescents who have left school and who are under the age of 18
- d) Expectant mothers
- e) People who are blind, crippled or aged and infirm

These plans for civilian evacuation—the last known to be issued—make no allowance for the evacuation of any able-bodied men over the age of 18.

For the evacuees there is separation from their husbands. Or fathers. Or sons. There is the prospect of living in a strange house—crowded together with unknown people. With restricted gas, electricity, food and water.

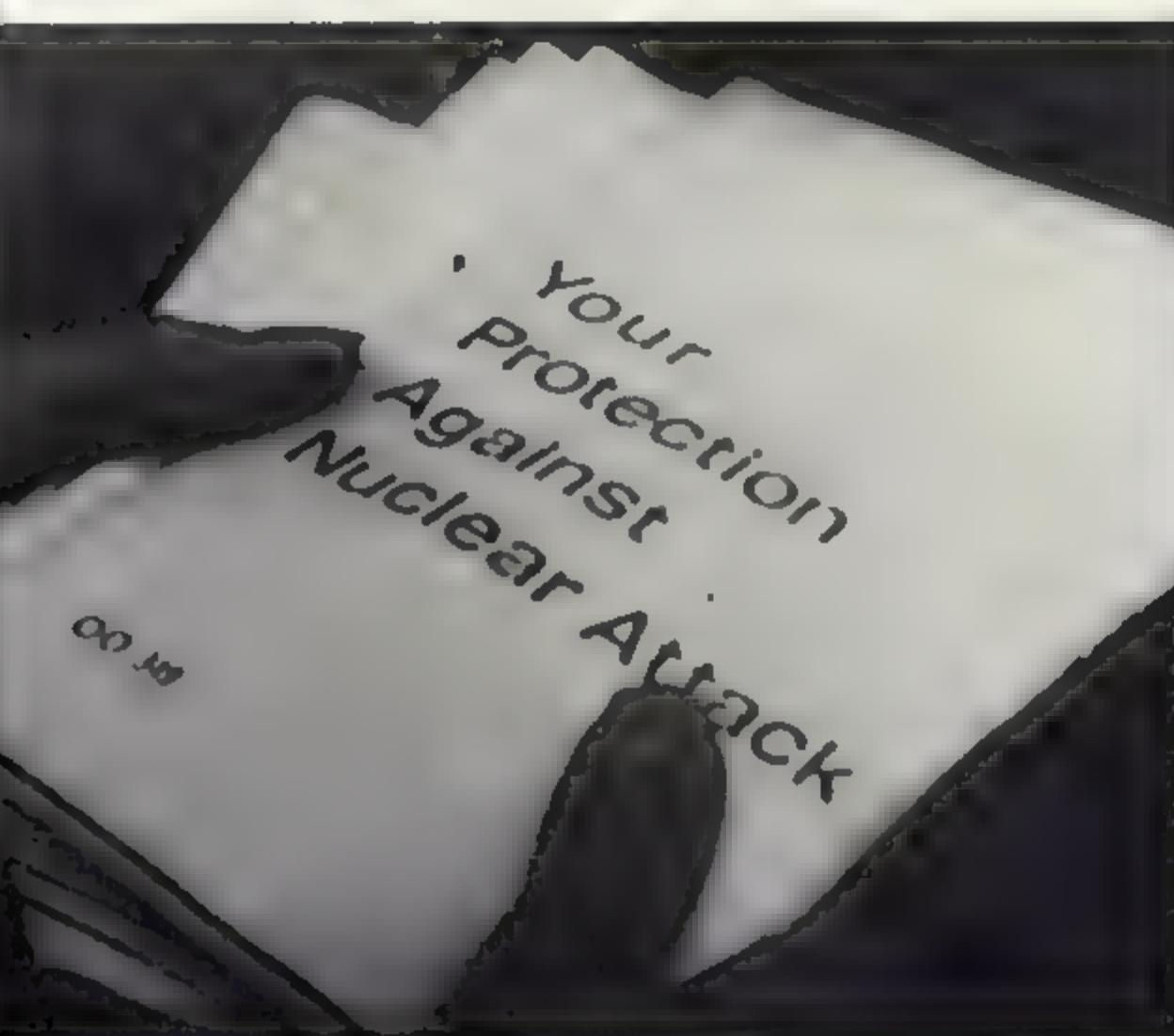


For this woman, there is the compulsory billeting on her of between 4 to 8 people. People who will need to use her bed linen—her toilet—her kitchen—her food.



Even if full scale civilian evacuation were successfully carried out in Britain, it is probable it would be considerably negated by one factor:

Allowing for the normal S.W. wind, and following a mid-range nuclear attack upon the key airfields and cities of Britain, at least 20 per cent of even the areas into which people had been evacuated would be rendered totally uninhabitable by the resulting radio-active fall-out.



Your protection Against Nuclear Attack

on m

Public warning

The Civil Defence Corps would probably attempt to deliver to as many householders as possible a leaflet suggesting certain precautions to be taken against blast and fall-out

The last time such a leaflet was released to the public in Britain was in 1959

Price: 9d

Also, the National Television Authorities would probably transmit a series of Home Office documentary films showing the effects of a thermonuclear explosion

It is believed that such films are *already* prepared, but have never as yet been shown to the public

1959

'Public education in the matters of radioactivity will be progressive during the next few years'
British Home Office Manual

1965

'Do you know what Strontium 90 is and what it does to the human body?'

'I've no idea. I know it's some sort of gunpowder or something that blows up'

Kent housewife

In a time of crisis it is expected by the Civil Defence
that each household in Britain prepare itself a refuge room

This is to be achieved by bricking up all the windows of a
ground floor room, lining the exterior walls with sandbags
and perhaps even preparing another sand bag structure—
a 'lean to'—inside the room



'My prices for the moment run as follows -
hessian sacks for sand bags 10 for £1; sand 50s
per cubic yard; soil £7.10.0 for five cubic yards;
deal planks 8d to 1s per foot'

Building contractor

During the plague that struck London in 1665, surrounding towns padlocked their water wells, shut up their stores and posted armed guards on the roads from London to keep out the refugees who were fleeing the city. As a result, many Londoners died of thirst, exposure and starvation

Three centuries later, one Civil Defence official in Nevada, US, has been quoted as saying that, in the event of a nuclear attack "a million or more persons might stream into this area from Southern California . . . they would come in like a swarm of human locusts . . . and would pick the valley clean of food, medical supplies and other goods. Our law enforcement agencies are not numerically equipped to handle such an influx of humanity, so we have drawn up plans for a militia"



'I am keeping this with me in case anyone tries to break into my refuge room—and I certainly have every intention of using it'

The crosses on the map indicate the approximate situation of the fourteen regional seats of government

Each RSG—accommodated in specially prepared underground headquarters—will be staffed by between 300-400 carefully chosen personnel at a time of threatened nuclear war

Under the control of regional commissioners these administrators will rule the survivors of a nuclear-devastated Britain

The commissioner himself will probably be either a senior Cabinet Minister, or perhaps a leading member of British industry, commerce or the Bar. With him in the RSG will be officers of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, Fire Brigade and Civil Defence. There will also be representatives of the COI, the GPO, the Ministries of Health, Food, Transport, Power and Labour. There will also be senior university lecturers in physics, chemistry, engineering and technology

Because of their access to, and control over, vital food and medical supplies, uncontaminated water, transport, communication with the outside world, arms and supplies of ammunition, these administrators will probably hold the power of life and death over all the survivors in any particular region

These administrators have already been chosen, and probably number in total, about 5,000 men and women. But their names are unknown, and their appointments to these key positions of power and privilege in a nuclear-devastated country have been made in secret



On nearly every single aspect arising from the threat of a nuclear war which has been indicated in the last twenty pages of this book there has been practically a complete silence in the press and on television during the last ten years in Great Britain

Silence on the entire theory of the nuclear balance of terror, and where that theory might one day fail

Silence on the strategic worth and cost of Britain's own nuclear weapons system

Silence on Britain's resources in terms of grappling with full-scale evacuation and other emergency measures

Silence on the entire system of regional seats of government and the post attack administration

Silence on the probable effect of a mid-range nuclear attack on Britain, and silence on the effects of nuclear weapons themselves

Silence...



This is an Honest John nuclear missile being fired by a British infantry position against a large concentration of Russian infantry 18 miles away

This weapon, described as 'tactical' has the destructive power of the atom bomb which fell on Hiroshima

It is quite probable that it will explode over or near an area of civilian population

'The purpose of our using tactical nuclear weapons would be to make it clear to the Russians that the stakes were large and that we were willing to take a small but appreciable risk of an all-out thermo-nuclear war. Our action might be effective precisely because it would be so dangerous'
Leading US strategist

West Germany

Following the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam, the Russian and East German forces effect an armed entry into West Berlin. This is immediately followed by an invasion of East Germany by NATO armoured divisions. The Soviet counter-attack precipitates the release of tactical nuclear warheads to NATO ground forces—being their *only* line of defence against a numerically superior enemy

Of the 750 intermediate range ballistic missiles at present held by the Russians and targeted on the European countries of the NATO alliance, it is believed that a considerable number are *liquid-fuelled*

As this liquid fuel is extremely volatile, it has to be placed in the missile at the last moment before boost-off

This in turn means that such missiles cannot be stored below ground level in re-inforced bunkers as say, the American Minuteman missiles, but instead have to wait above ground ready for last-minute fuelling

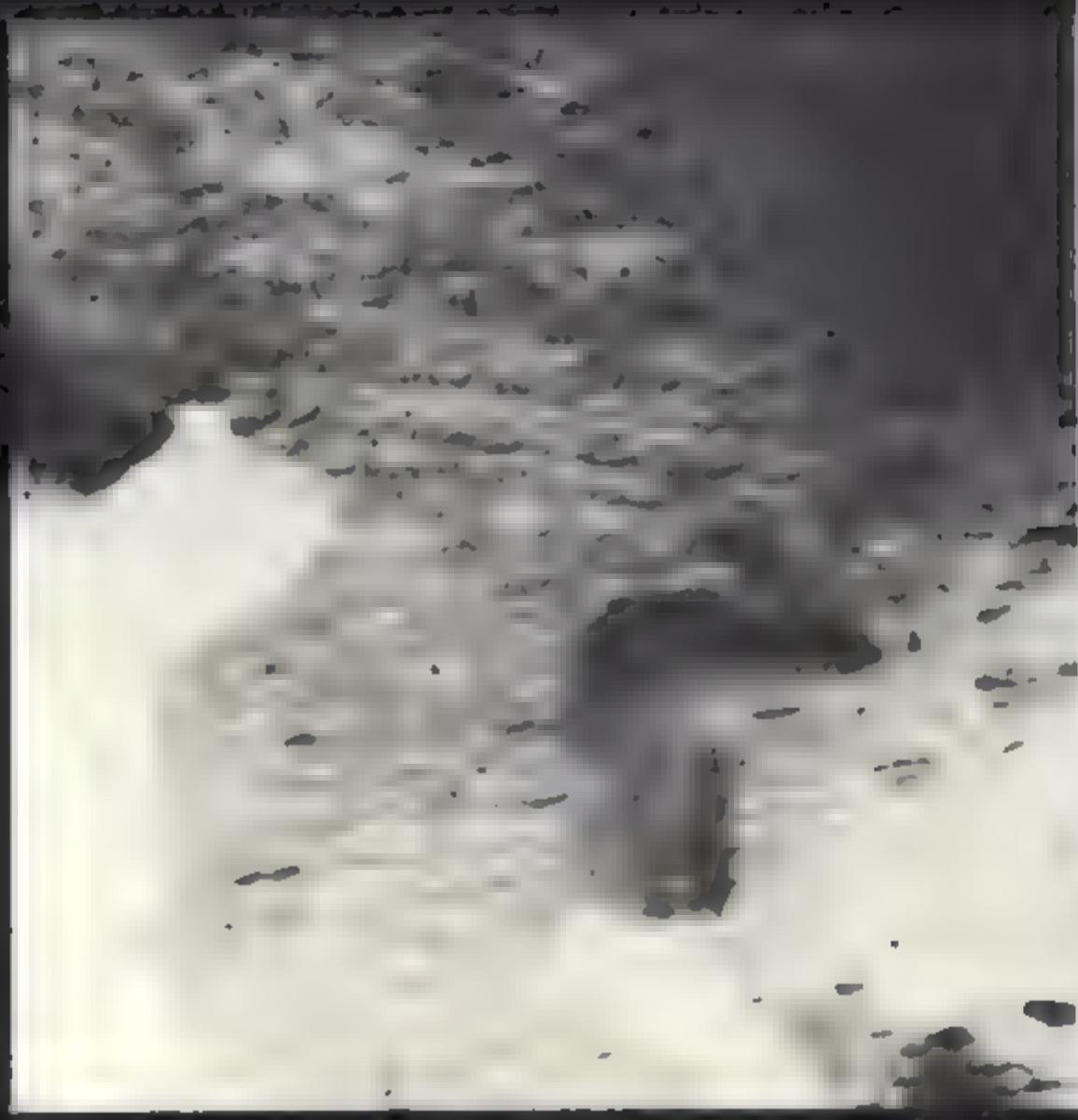
Such missiles are therefore extremely vulnerable to counter-attack by other missiles or bombs, and rather than risk the possibility of losing them before a late fuelling stage could be completed, it is probable that the Russians would have no alternative but to fire most of them at a far *earlier* stage in any moment of international crisis than would otherwise have been necessary

'Another expression we use is *The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy*.

Let me give you an example.

Say that we in America thought that the Soviets were behaving in a suspicious way—then we would react accordingly, and disperse the civilian population and send up the bombers ready. Now the Soviets, even if they *weren't* doing anything hostile, would see us preparing and think that we were getting ready to hit them—so they'd get ready for the war. We'd see them getting ready—we'd say 'ah, we were right the first time—they *are* going to hit us—we'd better hit them before they hit us'. And there you have a nuclear war out of nothing . . .'

US nuclear strategist



Great Britain

A one-megaton hydrogen bomb has exploded over an air-base in South-East England.

These two people are *six miles* from the point of the explosion.

Caught in the heat flash, their exposed skin has been charred through its entire thickness.

The fluid from their eyeballs has melted and is running down their cheeks.

The bush next to them has burst into flames.



Out to a distance of *six miles* from the explosion:

The heat wave has ignited interior domestic dressings such as curtains and furniture fabrics, exterior foliage and wooden out-buildings.

The blast wave has severed electrical circuits, ruptured and ignited gas lines, and scattered burning materials from open fires, stoves and boilers.

Within the centre of this area, the multiple fires caused by the heat wave have joined the fires caused by the blast wave.

The result—a fire-storm.



This is a fire-storm

Rochester in Kent

**2½ miles from the impact point
of a Soviet thermonuclear missile
which has exploded off-course
on its flight to London Airport**

**Within its centre a column
of hot air and fire one mile
broad at the base reaches
1½ miles into the sky**

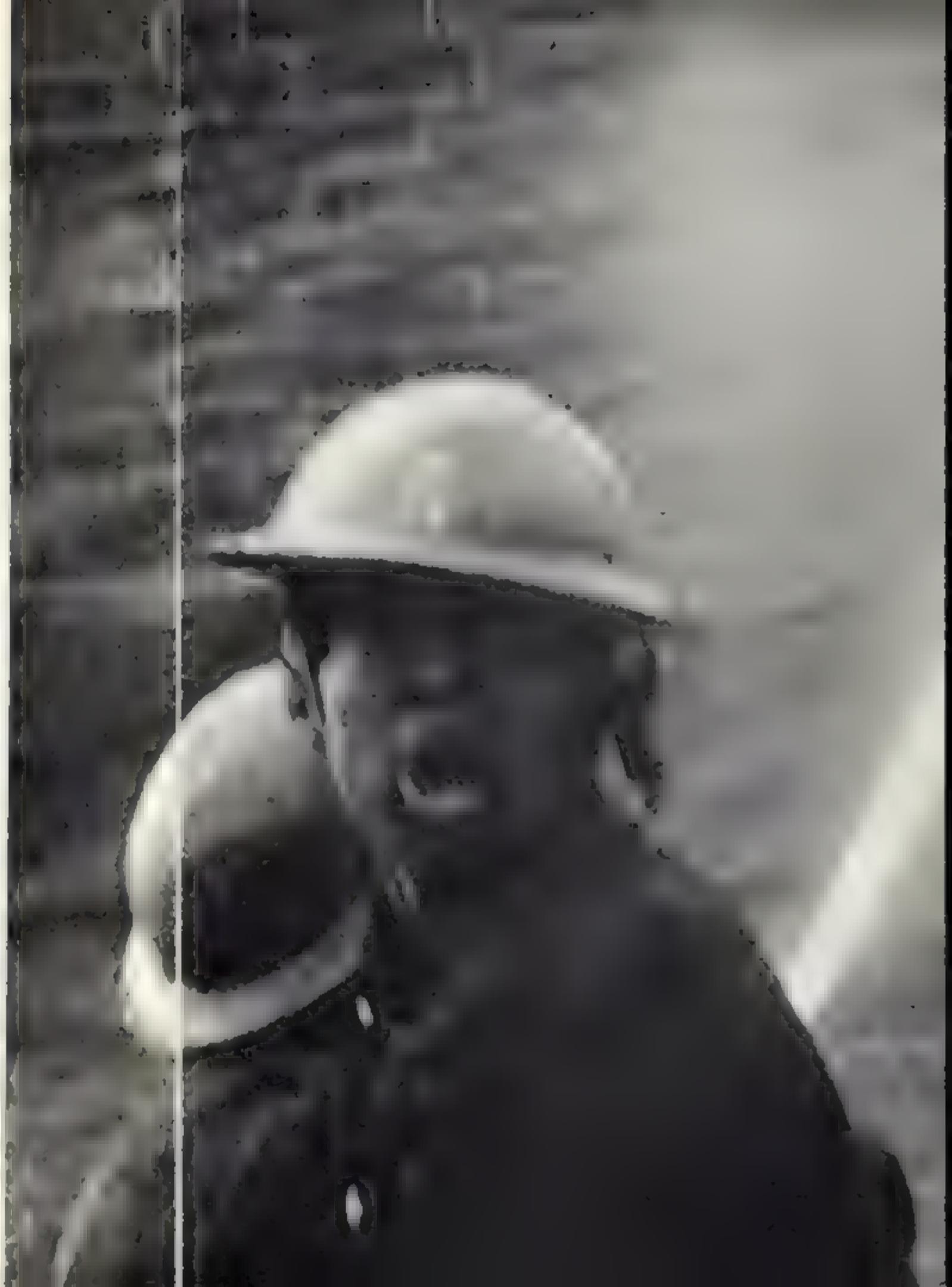
**Within its centre one
or two houses in every
three are on fire**

**Within its centre hurricane-
force winds are sucked in by
this rising heat to reach
surface velocities exceeding
100 mph**

During World War II one single half square mile of fire in Canterbury, Kent, required the services of 280 firemen and 101 appliances



These firemen—in World War III—are trying to control a fire-area *three times* the size. And—because of casualties from burning, crushing, gassing and flying debris—with only a *quarter* of the personnel





This is the wind of a fire-storm. It can take vehicles and overturn them. It can take trees three feet in diameter and uproot them.



**'I saw a mother and child come down the street—
and there was a terrific gust of wind, and the child
was sucked out of its mother's grasp into the flames'**

This is a fire-storm

Within its centre the oxygen is being consumed in every cellar, shelter, corridor and ground floor room, to be replaced by the gases carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and methane

Within its centre the temperature is rising to 800 degrees Centigrade





When the carbon dioxide content of inhaled air is greater than 30% it will cause diminished respiration, fall of blood pressure, coma, loss of reflexes and anaesthesia



This father and his son are dying.
Both of gassing and of heat stroke



'I believe that in the next World War both sides could stop before the ultimate destruction of cities—so that they could retire for ten years or so of 'post attack recuperation' in which World Wars IV to VIII could be prepared'

Leading US nuclear strategist



Two and a half hours after the beginning of the attack, a few surviving aircraft of the British V-bomber force near the Russian border. Their purpose—retaliation. Their objective—people like this.

'If you are looking in the direction of an atomic flash the light is so bright it will blind you so we carry this eye patch. You fly with one eye. If you happen to see a flash you take it off and use the good eye left.'

RAF V-bomber pilot

The Rand Corporation of America calculated that 10,000 megatons would be sufficient to kill 82% of the entire population of the Soviet Union.

Following the explosion of three single megaton missiles within the county boundary of Kent—it has been estimated that *each* surviving doctor would be faced by at least 350 *casualties*, some suffering from severe lacerations caused by impacting slivers of glass and wood...

...many others suffering from severe second and third degree burns



'I had a little boy with me just now—his right arm was burned almost to the bone. Some of these people are just falling apart...'

Nurse

It is at present planned by the Civil Defence Medical Authorities that Forward Aid Parties shall take the wounded to emergency examination units set up on the fringe of the destruction area. The function of these examination units (called Forward Medical Aid Units) is to place each casualty into one of three categories to determine whether or not that casualty is 'worth' hospital treatment

Present belief in the ability of the Forward Medical Aid Units to deal with the expected number of casualties hinges on calculations made by Civil Defence Medical Authorities that each doctor in such a Unit will be able to work *non-stop* on an 8-hour shift dealing with a total of 240 injured people

This he will only be able to do if he spends no more than 120 seconds on the examination of each patient. But it is also likely that at least 15% of these casualties will need an on-the-site emergency operation

Therefore, even if he only spends *five minutes* *non-stop* on each of these emergency operations (perhaps an amputation or a severed artery) a doctor would still be left with over 200 wounded patients to categorize at an examination time of 84 seconds for each person

Such are the present official calculations



'Category One are the lightly injured. These ... we just point to a pile of bandages and tell them to get on with it'

'For Category Two, there is the 'bonus' of medical treatment ... this probably means three days wait on the floor of a filth-littered corridor at some base hospital'

'The third category is the worst. These are people with, say, 50 per cent or more body surface burns ... they haven't a hope in hell and we put them into what we call the 'holding section'. They think they're going to get treatment, but we've just got to leave them there ... I know what'll be happening in a few days—they'll be asking me to kill them'

Doctor

'One of the first psychological reactions following a nuclear attack would be a fear complex amongst certain people resulting from a deep shock and revulsion at the enormous number of maimed bodies'

Psychiatrist



'Amongst many survivors there would be prolonged fear reactions—sleeplessness, headaches, inability to concentrate and sometimes a persistent dazed and confused condition'

Psychiatrist

Nightmares; bed-wetting; crying in sleep; excitability; loss of appetite; depression; lethargy...

Many of these people will probably lapse into a state of permanent neurosis, because they will totally outnumber the psychiatric services needed to cure them

This too will be the legacy of thermonuclear war

...and the world will be a sadder place

'They are simply burning all the bodies.
There are just too many of them to bury.
The buildings in there are just full of them . . .
so all we can do is to lay them on
raised steel girders and put a fire underneath . . .
it's like making a grill . . .'

Civil Defence worker

In World War I
5% of the killed were civilians

In World War II
48% of the killed were civilians

In the Korean War
84% of the killed were civilians

In World War III
90-95% of the dead will probably be civilians



'We were burning the bodies
and two soldiers said that they
weren't going to do it any longer . . .
and an officer came up and
asked them to get on with it . . .
with the burning . . .
and they just said 'no' again . . .
and so he pulled out a pistol
and shot them both on the spot . . .'

Civil Defence worker



Wedding rings taken from the dead as one of the few means of identification of corpses burned beyond recognition

This was a measure carried out in Germany after the heavy bombing in World War II



Two days after the attack the military authorities hand over arms and ammunition to the police

One of the first tasks for an armed police squad is to help the over-burdened doctors of Forward Medical Aid Units to relieve the misery of those in 'Category 3'



'Minor changes in the final text of Scheme 13 'The Church in the Modern World' have made that document less sweeping in its condemnation of war'

'The most remarkable change is in the deletion of a quotation from Pope John's 'Pacem in Terris' which would have ruled out the possibility of a 'just war' being fought with nuclear weapons'

'Those Bishops who felt that the earlier version seemed to demand of Christian nations that they rid themselves of their nuclear stockpiles and cease the armaments race have been re-assured that such is not the Church's intention...'

The Guardian Rome Dec 2 1965





For the forty-eight hours following a nuclear attack on Britain—an estimated one third of her entire land surface would be covered by a total dose of radiation exceeding ten times the amount needed to kill a man in the open.

For many of those within these areas who had even remained inside the shelter of their homes—there would still be death within three weeks.

'Insects—not man or other proud species—are really the only ones fitted for survival in the nuclear age. They—and bacteria—are enormously radiation-resistant. Let a man absorb 600 roentgens and he perishes soon and miserably, but 100,000 roentgens may not discomfort an insect in the least'

'The cockroach, a venerable and hardy species, will take over the habitation of the foolish humans and compete only with other insects or bacteria'

H. Bentley Glass, biologist—member of Atomic Energy Commission's Advisory Committee on Biology and Medicine





This is the face of a boy lying in a refugee camp near Dover in Kent

He has vomited and undergone nausea on the first day of his exposure to 380 roentgens of radioactivity

But now he feels better and for two weeks he will feel relatively well, although important changes are continually occurring inside his body

In about two weeks' time he will begin to bleed into various organs of his body, and haemorrhages under his skin will be observed. His hair will begin to fall out in patches and he will suffer from general malaise and fever

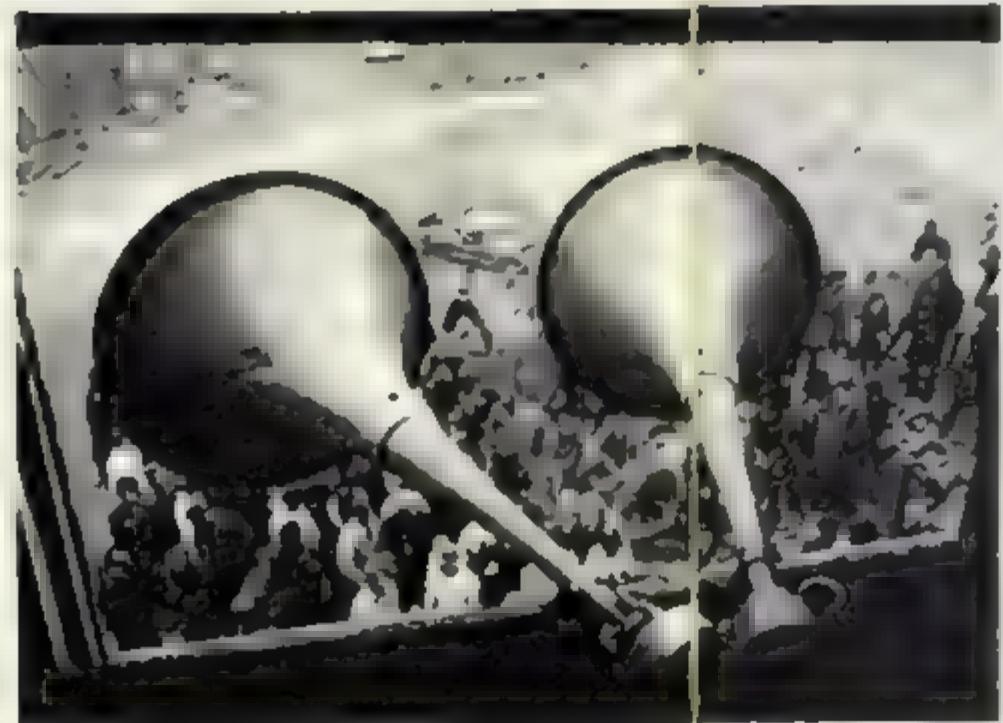
In the third week he will begin to suffer from inflammation of the mouth and throat, from severe diarrhoea, and general emaciation. Ulceration about the lips will then commence, and will spread from the mouth through his entire gastro-intestinal tract in the terminal stage of the sickness

In the fourth week, he will die

The human foetus is between 20 to 60 times more sensitive to radiation than the normal adult

Peak stages of development in the womb at which the following might occur if the unborn child be subjected to irradiation:

Cleft palate	32 days
Deafness	25 days
Skeletal deformity	37 days
Finger deformity	20-54 days
Spinal curvature	29 days
Anæmia	41-70 days
Microcephaly (dwarf head)	32 days



'At one time over the loudspeakers ... they were telling us of our reprisals against Russia and the satellite countries and against China ... and they listed a number of cities that have been destroyed ... presumably as a sort of boost for us ... as though it mattered ...'

British housewife

**"In our calculations
as to the recovery period
after a nuclear attack,
we have to remember to
ask ourselves—will the
survivors envy the dead?"**

US strategist



'We are in the process of making an exact inventory of all the remaining food available within our county—but from the figures already calculated we've estimated that our stocks will run out completely in about three weeks' time...'

Kent Town Clerk

'Many people now are beginning to become too apathetic to even come to the communal feeding centres to collect their ration of food. So we have had to undertake the distribution of food into certain areas by truck... under armed guard, of course'

Kent Town Clerk



This is the menu of a meal prepared by the Welfare section of the Civil Defence Corps during an exercise supposed to be set after a thermonuclear attack:

**Braised steak
Carrots
Sprouts
Roast and mashed potatoes
Steamed pudding
Apple pie and custard**



'In the face of growing hunger riots and violent demonstrations outside our food depots—we have just had to announce that dwindling supplies of food will now be kept as a form of bonus for only those who still help us perform the vital maintenance of law and order'

Kent Town Clerk





Fourteen days after the attack a food rioter is killed by the police in a town in South-East England

Two days later a police ammunition truck and its contents are seized, and its volunteer drivers murdered



'When morale falls, ideals fall and then go and behaviour becomes more primitive—more a thing of instinct'

Psychiatrist





The following day
the first police
officer is killed
in Kent



'On the authority of the Regional Commissioner under Article 17 in the new National Emergency Code dealing with civil disturbances and the prevention of Crown-appointed officers from carrying out their lawful duties, John Edward Jarrett and William Michael Eades are hereby sentenced to death by firing squad. May God have mercy on their souls'









This is a Government food control centre—seized and pilfered by armed anti-authority elements

'In Germany during the last war—
even amongst the so-called
'decent' middle-class, there
was a tendency towards looting,
black-market and petty theft...'
Psychiatrist

... Before the attack, people behaved generally fairly well—and seemed to be pushed together by the common danger. But now, you feel once something goes wrong, everything goes wrong and gets worse and worse and gathers momentum. And before you realise it, you have the whole normal civilised structure of behaviour and law and order just falling apart. I think the final straw has been hunger—yes, hunger'

Police Inspector



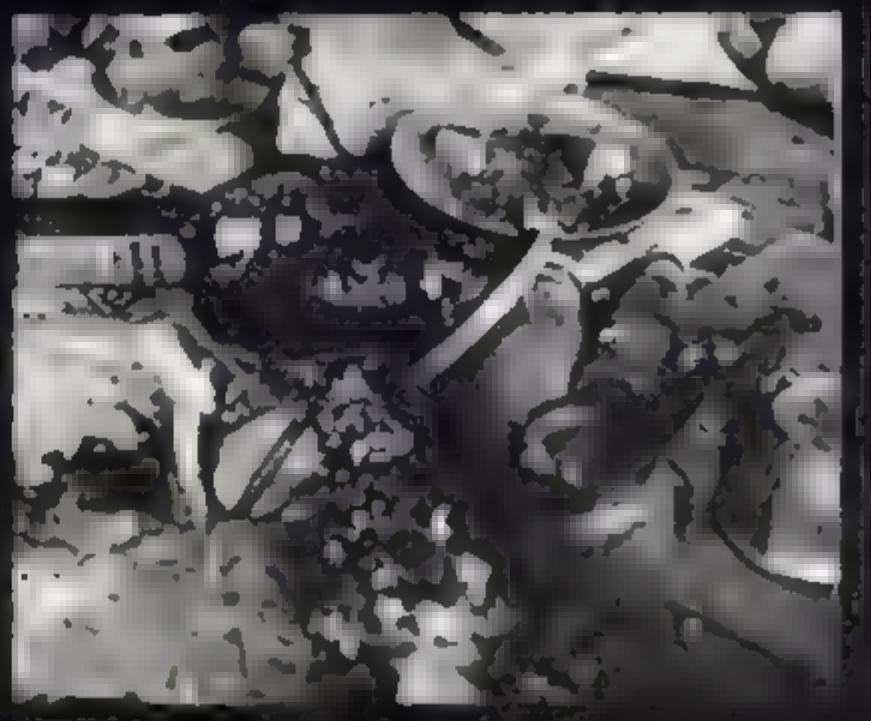
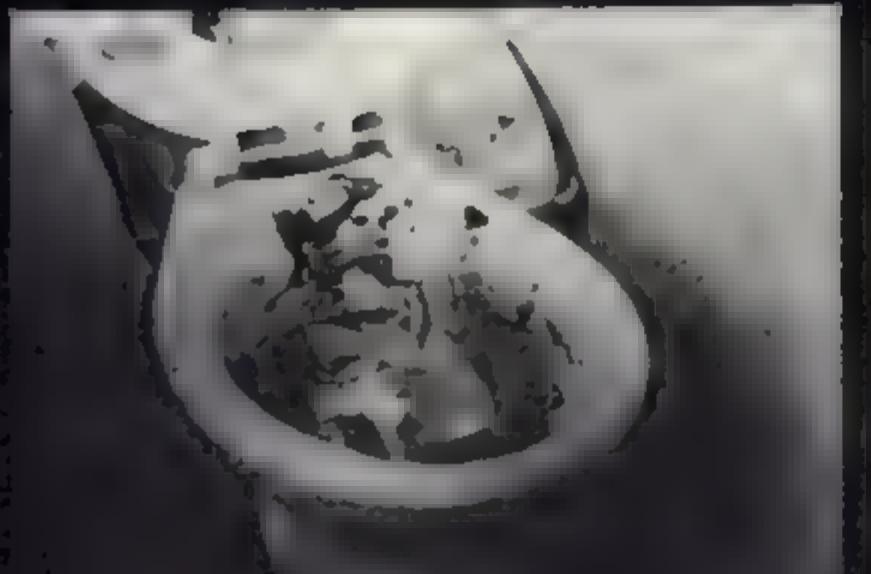
'At Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the population three months later was found to be apathetic and profoundly lethargic. Leaking water pipes all over the city. No garbage or sewage collection organised—people living often in their own filth in total dejection and inertia'



Malnutrition
Scurvy
Bubonic plague
Dysentery



Tuberculosis
Epidemic typhus
Hepatitis
Gastro-enteritis



Things don't matter any more.
One no longer cares about all the
things one was once worried about.
Hiroshima survivor

'Over 50 per cent of the rats in the London sewage system carry with them today the disease spirochaetal jaundice. After a severe nuclear attack these rats would be out in the open'

Doctor



This baby boy has been bitten on the arm by a rat

There are now no longer any drugs available to prevent the disease which may well follow ...





... I saw one of the little boys
in the compound here yesterday...
he was bouncing around... and playing
hopscotch I think... then suddenly
he sat down as though he were very
tired... and his face suddenly
went all listless... like that
of an old man...



The world's stockpile of thermonuclear weapons now equals almost twenty tons of high explosive for every man, woman and child on earth

This stockpile is still steadily growing

In silence